

HOOSIER FOLKLORE BULLETIN

Edited by
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CHANGES SUFFERED BY "THE WIFE WRAPPED IN WETHER'S SKIN"

Child Ballad 277, variously known as "The Wife Wrapped in Wether's Skin," "The Cooper of Fife," and--in the United States--"Dandoo," presents interesting evidence for the changes suffered by a ballad transplanted from one country to another and some ground for conjecture upon the reason for those changes. The ballad, briefly, tells the story of a husband who beats his spouse because she fails to do her house chores, but who does so by beating a wether's skin which he puts around her. In Child and Ford there are available six different versions of this ballad that are Scotch. Two English versions, also different from the others, are presented by Sharp and Child, while there also exist Scotch and English forms which are exact parallels of Ford's Scotch form. Then there are just about forty different American versions of the ballad, some of which have been reprinted several times. On these forty-six forms of 277 is this study based. A complete study of the changes would make a very respectable thesis; an analysis of the interrelation of the refrains alone would be a worthwhile project. But for this paper I intend to analyze only certain textual changes in the actual narrative part of the ballad and to state some generalizations about forms.

Of the English and Scottish versions, all except Child's Suffolk variant, which is very fragmentary, and the Somerset variant of the JFSS, make it more or less evident that the wife who gets beaten in the wether's skin is of gentle birth. In Child A, Robin says "I darena pay you, for your kin"; in Child B, despite the fact that his wife is "among the warst," Robin dare not beat her for "a'" her kin; in Child C, it is specifically stated that the cooper has a "gentle" wife, whom he dares not beat because of her "proud" kin; so it is with Child D and E, where the wethers skin is used because of the wife's "proud" or "gentle" kin. Ford's Scotch version says both that the wife is "gentle" and that she does not card or spin because of her "gentle kin," as well as giving her kin as a reason why the cooper must use the device of a wether's skin. The Aberdeenshire and Lancashire variants, since they are exact duplicates of Ford's version, of course repeat this detail. Here the Connecticut version, since it is directly traceable to Scotland, might well be mentioned, for it also states the cooper's wife won't work because of her high-bred kin and the cooper thrashes her in the wether's skin because of those same kin. This particular point of the text cannot be over-emphasized, for it is one which caused the American perpetuators of the ballad no little difficulty.

Besides the fact that she is of gentle birth, many other reasons are advanced for the wife's lack of industry. Her comely hue and her gold ring are almost always mentioned. Child B, D, and E all imply she'd rather be active in high society, while E also mentions as a reason her desire to gossip, somewhat allied to these others as a consideration in the mind of a leisure-class person.

With one exception, this general lack of industry is the reason for the wife's receiving a sound thrashing. That one exception, however, the Somerset version, offers a very interesting problem. In it the beating is administered direct; that is, there is no wether's skin (this is also true of the fragmentary Suffolk version, the state of which makes it poor evidence); no reason is given for the wife's shiftlessness except that "she

was not of the best"; the husband is provoked to the beating by finding no supper; and the wife promises reform even to doing the ploughing if necessary. The motif of gentle birth has been supplanted--indeed by one much the opposite--and logically enough the use of the wether's skin has also disappeared--a type of logic not to be found in many American versions. The anger at not finding the dinner and the promise to do the ploughing are interesting. The first appears, so far as I know, in no other English or Scotch form, and the second appears but once elsewhere, in Child A. Both I think are signs that the ballad is becoming merely a joke about the low classes, or just a good joke, whereas the earlier forms show a more dramatic--if none-the-less humorous--struggle between husband and wife of different social strata; I think this is even true when the husband is called the "laird" of Fife in Child E and D, both of which stress the standing of the wife--the former unusually clearly.

Various ways of grouping the American forms of the ballad suggest themselves, but since this study is merely of the material, perhaps a vaguely geographic arrangement from east to south and from south to west is no more inconvenient than any other. To avoid a cumbersome apparatus of footnotes, the author presents at the close of this paper a bibliography of the various versions. For convenience, when there is more than one version from a state, those several versions will be distinguished by numbers, as Maine--1 and Maine--2.

The very first American version, Maine--1, gives a clear impression of the problem one will face in the changes wrought by transplanting a ballad. In Maine--1, the wife won't card or spin, not because of her kin but because of her skin. The ballad-maker is faced with the question then of what to rhyme with the word brew, formerly rhimed with hue, since that idea has already been expressed in the wife's concern about her skin. So the reason she won't bake or brew is concern for her shoe. Given cold johnny-break for dinner, the husband beats his wife in an old sheepskin and tells her to tell his kin how he tanned his old sheepskin.

The motif of the wife's gentle birth has completely disappeared, and its disappearance has occasioned some rhiming difficulties for the ballad-maker, difficulties which he has handled rather craftily--except, I think, for the conclusion wherein the husband's recommendation to his wife seems unnecessary self-pride in the husband's prerogative to beat his wife. The joke definitely has been cheapened, made more elementary.

Maine--2, a short four-quadrain version, omits all but Jenny, the wife's suggestion that her husband get his own dinner, her consequent beating in the wether's skin, and her promise to tell her family. But Jenny's complaint is made on the grounds of cruelty, not on the fact that her high birth exempts her from punishment. Barry's comment that the line of the refrain

Jenny, come gentle, Rose Marie

may have originally been, as in the Massachusetts version,

Gentle Jenny cried rosemarree

adds interest, in that if the line means Jenny cried for mercy, the ballad has gone completely away from the wife's reliance upon the prerogatives of her social status.

The Vermont variant includes Billy's wife who refuses to go into the kitchen because of her lily-white skin. Whipped in a wether's skin, she threatens to call in her brothers who would stop her husband. He, of course, repeats the customary line that he can tan his own sheepskin. Once, again, the motif of gentle birth has disappeared.

Quite detailed is the Massachusetts rendition. Jenny won't go to the kitchen because of her white-heeled shoe, won't wash or bake because of her white apron tape, won't card or spin because of her gay gold ring. Again there occur the beating in a wether's skin and Jenny's threat to tell her kin --with a fair degree of pointlessness. Husband William explains he has only thrashed his wether's skin, and Jenny reforms.

The five Kentucky versions all differ somewhat from the New England variants we have already seen. In Kentucky--1, the wife, who is "None of the best," is beaten in a wether's skin for offering her husband a cold dinner. Pleading she is being beaten on her bare skin, the shiftless one cries for her kin, but the husband again asserts that he is only tanning a sheep's hide. Apparently the only cause for the wife's plea is her conviction that she is being treated cruelly. Kentucky--4 and --5 are very much the same except that in --4 the wife is going to tell that she was whipped with a wether's skin and in --5 she will tell how she was beaten with a hickory stick, as she was. In each case, it is cruelty that the wife objects to. Kentucky --2 and --3 differ from the others, for both have left out the wether's skin entirely. Indeed once the gentle-birth motif disappears, there is little except the joke to keep the wether's skin motif in the ballad. In Kentucky--3, the recalcitrant wife won't use the kitchen for fear of spoiling her shoes. Offering her husband cold dinners earns her a beating from a hickory stick. Here, of course, her basis for an appeal to her parents is unquestionably her husband's cruelty. Unperturbed, the husband tells her to add to her tale the fact that he'll do it again. Kentucky--2 has gone even one step farther in that it omits even the wife's plea to her kin. In return for a cold dinner, the husband beats his wife with a hickory stick; promptly she reforms. It would be interesting to conjecture about the comparative ages of the Kentucky versions from these changes in content, but I am afraid such a process would not be entirely justifiable.

Most fruitful of all the states, Virginia presents twelve versions. Virginia--2, --3, and --6 all tell the same story. The wife is "not of the best" (this is the only detail not present in all, Virginia--3 not having it). For offering a cold dinner or refusing to prepare supper, she is beaten in a wether's skin and threatens to tell certain members of her family. Again the husband evades the charge of cruelty by telling her to report that he was beating or dressing his wether's skin. Virginia --12 tells the same story fragmentarily. The husband beats his wife who will tell her family "of the wicked things you do." He returns the usual answer.

Not very far from the above pattern are Virginia --1, --4, --5 and --8. All have the cold dinner as provocation for the beating administered to the wife, and all have the wether skin motif. However they form an interesting subgroup for each represents a degeneration of the wife's threat to tell her family about the husband's disregard for her rights. In Virginia--1, she's going to tell his family how he tanned his wether's skin. In --4, he is going to tell her family how he tanned his wether's skin. In --5, he tells her to relate to her kin how he tanned her back with a wether's skin (notice how the subterfuge of the wether's skin is made absolutely pointless). And in --8 the wife is told to tell her family how her husband tanned his mutton skin.

The remaining Virginia forms depart even more from the story. Virginia--9 has the "none of the best" wife who has only bread for supper. However it tries to rationalize the wether's skin motif. The husband kills a mutton for his supper and gives to his lazy wife nothing except the skin which he wraps around her back. A beating is implied, but the ballad goes no further. Virginia--7 omits the wether's skin element, has the wife beaten with a switch and complaining of the "terrible" whipping. Otherwise it is much like the other complete Virginia forms. Virginia--11 and --10 are very fragmentary; the former preserves only the cold provender on the shelf and a beating with a bundle of switches, while the latter presents the none-of-the-best wife, cold meat and bread for breakfast, and the wife's recommendation that the husband prepare anything else himself.

Though less numerous, the West Virginia forms present some interesting variants without any close parallels elsewhere. Closest to the norm, whatever that ephemeral form may have been, are West Virginia --6 and --1. Despite its strange refrain of Bando and despite the fact that its stanza does not confine the actual running text to a couplet as most of the forms do, West Virginia --6 is the closer of these two forms. It tells of a wife who is none-of-the-best and who offers bread for breakfast. She is beaten in a wether's skin, the full effect of which motif is again lost for she threatens to tell her family what a whipping she received. The humor is retained, however, since the husband replies, telling her to go ahead, "But I'm just dusting off my old wether's skin." In West Virginia --1, the wife refusing to prepare dinner, the husband starts into the kitchen but hesitates for fear of spoiling his cloth shoes. He whips his wife without using a wether's skin. When she threatens to tell her family, he is so unmoved that he asserts he will do it again and thus reforms his wife.

More distinctive are West Virginia --2, --3, --4, and --5. Form --3 has the none-of-the-best wife who offers nothing but bread for a meal and is thus beaten in a wether's skin. When she threatens to tell all her family that she was beaten on her "naked skin," the husband runs away! Form --4 is in narrative exactly the same as --3 except that the husband runs away when the wife threatens to tell all their neighbors and their two families how he has tanned his wether's skin. West Virginia --2 is further corrupted, for the husband runs away as soon as he find there is only meat and bread on the shelf for dinner. Incoherently enough the ballad ends with a recommendation not to marry a woman with lice. As least as corrupt is West Virginia --5, which presents the none-of-the-best wife who offers only cold "corn dodger" for breakfast. Again the husband promptly runs away, this time to his family where he exchanges badinage with his father about their respective wives. There is in this variant a very strange relic of the wether's skin motif. The runaway husband cuts the tail from an old sheepskin and wears that tail himself, telling his family that such is the way he tans his sheepskin. These corrupt forms are, of course, strictly local variations; yet they are important in their changes or omissions of originally essential motifs.

The four Indiana versions are not particularly exciting. Indiana --3, which is another one of the few forms not reducible to a couplet per stanza, presents a wife whipped in a wether's skin because she had proffered cold bread for supper. After the whipping, her husband says,

Go tell your daddy and all your kin
I never whipped nothing but the old sheepskin.

Again the question is only that of cruelty. The other three are very similar to each other. Indiana--1 has the none-of-the-best type of wife, the cold bread for dinner, and a beating in a ram's skin. It goes no further. Indiana--2 is exactly like --1 except that after the beating, the husband throws the whip on the shelf and the auditor is advised that if he wants any more he can sing it himself. This ending I suppose to be a relic of the stanza in other American versions in which the husband is told if he's not satisfied with what's on the shelf he can cook more himself. Indiana--4 substitutes meat for the bread of --1, but is otherwise the same except for the stanza corruption that the wife is beaten is a wether.

Both Missouri forms are remarkably complete. Missouri --1 preserves the series of reasons for the wife's behavior. Sweet William's wife won't go to the kitchen because of her white-heeled shoes, won't wash or bake because of her white apron tape--of all things,--and won't card or spin because of her delicate skin. When she tells him to get his own dinner, Sweet William beats her in a wether's skin; and when she threatens to tell her father that he began the quarrel, he retorts to tell also how he beat his wether's skin. And so his wife reforms. Missouri--2 is practically an epitome of the "Dandoo" forms. It includes the none-of-the-best wife, cold corn bread for dinner, the beating in a sheep's skin. It also has a confusion in the wife's threat, for she will tell how she was whipped with an old sheep skin. The husband uses the classic retort

"I's only a-dressin' the old sheepskin."

The Mississippi version is also a good "Dandoo" type. Told to prepare his own breakfast if he doesn't like the bread on the shelf, an old man beats his wife in a wether's skin. She is going to report exactly what he did, but he says he'll do what he pleases with his wether's skin--an excellent pointing up of the humor that remains in the ballad after the dropping out of the gentle-birth motif.

There remain two "Dandoo" forms. One is Miss Pound's colorless Nebraska variant which includes only the none-of-the best wife, the cold bread for breakfast, and the beating in the wether's skin. The other is R. W. Jordan's rather complete version, the origin of which is not mentioned. Offering only dry bread for breakfast, the wife is beaten in a mutton skin. She will tell her family that she has been beaten, but her husband says to tell that he was tanning his mutton skin.

It seems evident that the ballad originally presented the situation of a husband confronted by a wife whose high birth made the chores of a housewife distasteful to her, yet whose high birth also prevented him from chastising her. So he wrapped her in a wether's skin, which he proceeded to beat. Upon her threat to tell her parents or family of the indignity, the husband assured her that he was only tanning his wether's skin--that she happened to be inside was unfortunate. Perhaps it is naive to believe that the Americans who preserved the ballad knew no social distinctions that exempted one from work; still something of the sort must have been true someplace. All the American versions omit the motif of gentle birth. With its omission, the point for the use of the wether's skin becomes hazy and the wife's threat of appealing to her family acquires either a very simple meaning or some more or less strange corruption. An occasional attempt was made to give meaning to the motifs that had lost their greater significance with the dropping of the gentle birth.

Although I think this democratization, if one may call it that, the most important single point in the study of texts of this ballad, there are others that bring up interesting considerations. For instance, eight of the eleven (eleven, if one counts the Scotch version found in Connecticut) English and Scottish forms include a specific statement that the wife reforms. The two Child "laird of Fife" versions and his fragmentary Suffolk version are alone lacking this statement. All the refrains known are present in the various ballads that have the point. But in America there are seven --Maine --1, Vermont, Massachusetts, Kentucky--2, and --5, West Virginia --1, and Missouri --1--ballads which state the wife reformed and each one of these has the same refrain. It is the "Gentle Jennie" refrain. Of course Maine --2, which is rather fragmentary, and Kentucky--3, which is not, also have this refrain and do not mention the wife's reform. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Kentucky--2, --3, and --5--all with the "Gentle Jenny" refrains--are the only versions which mention a hickory stick. So I should think it safe to say that the "Gentle Jenny" type is perhaps characterized by an assertion that the remiss wife reforms, while the Kentucky subtype of the same form has as the implement for the beating a hickory stick.

All the rest of the American versions seem to be interrelated. There are sixteen variants which characterize the wife as being "none-of-the-best". These sixteen are Kentucky--1; Virginia--2, --5--6--7--9, and --10; West Virginia--3, --4--5, and --6; Indiana--1, --2, --4; Missouri--2; and Nebraska. It might be recalled here that the Somerset form also includes this "none of the best" phrase. All of the sixteen American forms are of the "Dandoo" refrain. Indiana--1 and Virginia--2 do not happen to include the actual word "Dandoo," but the "klishomo klingo" of one and "Clang-clish-a-ma-clingo" of the other make it obvious that they are of the same genre. Eight of the other American versions have what is definitely a "Dandoo" refrain, while the remaining versions (Virginia--8, Indiana--3, and Virginia 12) all seem fragmentary. The first two have refrains which are definitely reminiscent of "Dandoo" refrains while the third has no refrain at all.

So it seems rather safe to assert that, besides the "Gentle Jenny" type, the only other native American form of Child 277 is the "Dandoo" version. This latter type is much the more frequent in occurrence. From more than half of the forms there is evidence that this type originally attributed the wife's shiftlessness to her being "none of the best." It tells a less moral, or more realistic, story than does the "Gentle Jenny" group. The "Dandoo" ballad never assumes the reform of the wife. Also this type seems to have suffered the most from oral transcription, for it has many corrupt forms. The very existence and survival of such corruptions, however, also bespeak the form's great popularity.

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THE FATAL INITIATION

Collecting folklore from Indiana University freshmen brought to my attention a decided interest in horror stories of various kinds. One of the most popular of these stories is that of the fatal fraternity initiation. In all, I was able to collect sixteen variants and four recognizable types. I have twelve variants of Type 1 but only one version of each of Types 2, 3, and 4. I am giving here examples of all types with an analysis of Type 1 following the texts.

1A. The Initiation Curse

Contributed by Jean Maney of Indianapolis, who heard it from her roommate, Miss Cox. Miss Cox heard the story in Warren, Ohio, in 1942. The locale of the story is supposedly northern Ohio.

One summer evening two members of the Deke Fraternity tied up on an island of a small inland lake because of a storm. They looked around the island to find a place to stay all night and found a small cabin, very well-kept. The owner, a tall, clean-shaven old man invited them to share his meal and his cabin.

After dinner the boys noticed that the old man wore a Deke ring and told him that they were also members. When he heard this he told them the story of his chapter.

He had been a member of a very active chapter, and the members were imaginative and daring. They decided that in the annual initiation they would tame down one of the pledges who was so successful in sports, dates, and studies that he irked them somewhat. They took him out to an old, deserted house, rumored to be haunted; and they told him to go up to the third floor and return with the hand of a skeleton he would find there. They gave him three matches to light his way.

Upon entering, he lit the first match right away, and it went out. He stumbled up the first flight of steps, and then lit another of his three matches. It flickered and died. He had only one more match. He lit it at the landing of the third floor. A draft coming through the boards blew it out.

The actives waited five minutes, ten; finally, when fifteen minutes had passed, one of the actives decided to go in and get the pledge. He told the rest of the members that if he wasn't back in twenty minutes to come after him.

He didn't come. They all joined hands for safety and started into the house. When they got to the third floor, they found that the pledge's hair had turned white and that he'd dropped dead when he had touched the skeleton. The same thing had happened to the active when he went up to get him.

Naturally they all felt terrible, but they hushed up the deaths, and no official action was ever taken.

However, every year a member of that chapter had died violently or had gone insane. They had been murdered; they had committed suicide, drowned, or lost their minds.

That, the old man said, was why he lived on this remote island. He had determined, when he saw the fate of all his old comrades, that he would survive the curse. Now he was the last remaining member who was alive and sane. He knew he couldn't be murdered, for he was alone on the island. He wasn't the type to commit suicide. He loathed water; so he couldn't drown. And of course, he said, he wasn't crazy. As he said these words, a wild gleam came into his eyes; and he arose and began to scream like a madman.

1B. The Initiation Curse

Contributed to Clayton Holaday, 1943, by Helen Cates, Washington, Indiana.

A fraternity at a large university was having its informal initiation. The members decided to take the pledges to an old three-story house that was thought to be haunted.

On the night of initiation, the active members took the pledges to the house at eleven o'clock. They gave each one five matches and definite instructions. Each was to go in the house alone and go up to the third floor and then come back down again. They were to light one match at the first floor landing, one at the second, and one at the third; then back down again, light ^{ing} one on the second, and one on the first. All the matches would then be used.

Just for meanness they decided to send in first a boy who wasn't exactly brave. In fact, he was awfully frightened. He went in. They saw his light on the first floor, on the second, and finally on the third. After that they saw nothing. They waited, but he didn't come down. They sent the second boy in and watched his lights on the first three floors, but after that nothing happened. They weren't terribly alarmed because they figured the two boys had got together to play a joke on them. The third boy was given his matches and sent up. They saw his light on the first and second floors, but only a flicker on the third floor. They waited and waited. Finally at midnight they went up with flashlights to see what had happened.

They found nothing until they got to the third floor. There they found that the first pledge had gone mad from fear and had torn the other two boys to bits when they got to the third floor. After that he had knocked his head against the wall and killed himself. All three were dead.

Every year after that, at midnight on the anniversary of the incident, some member of the group present that night went mad, until the last one was gone.

2. Tragedy In The Graveyard

Contributed by Marilyn Jean Anderson, South Bend, Indiana, February, 1944.

One Saturday night the active members of a certain fraternity in Wisconsin told the initiates that their final job was to hike out in the country to a cemetery and get the names and dates from all of the tombstones. They were told to work individually and not in groups.

Since the people in the town had told many stories about things that had happened in this particular cemetery at night, the boys were not very anxious to go. They went in a group, separated, and began writing down the names.

There was one boy in the group who had not been well. His doctor had warned him not to exert himself unnecessarily. He had done everything else the actives had asked; but when he got to the graveyard, he was too ill to get the names. He went back to the fraternity house and told the actives that he was too ill to get the names. They suspected a trick and decided to punish him. They took him back to the cemetery, tied him to one of the tombstones, and left him for the night.

When they returned the next day, they found him lying on the ground dead. His bonds had not been cut; they had been untied. His face was distorted by a look of horror; and there were long scratches which ran across his forehead and down his cheeks. A formal investigation was made, but no one ever found out who had untied the boy or what had made the scratches on his face.

3. Death From Supposed Loss Of Blood

Contributed by Robert Petranoff, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1943. Mr. Petranoff heard it from an older brother who heard it on the campus of the University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois.

Charlie, my older brother, told me this story several years ago before he went into the army. At that time, I doubted the validity of the tale. Now, after studying psychology and psychological effects on a person, I am inclined to believe it could have happened.

There was a death in one of the fraternity houses of a large eastern university. It was a most peculiar situation. Here is how it happened.

It was "Hell week," and the active members were pulling their usual initiation stunts. All the pledges were right guys and were taking the ribbing and paddlings without any kick. Joe, a big, tough end on the football team, was doing all right too. As a matter of fact, he was almost too good and wasn't getting his share of the paddle. This didn't please the actives; so they concocted a scheme which they thought would even up Joe's score.

Early one evening four of the members escorted Joe into an automobile, just for a little joy ride. Joe must have known something was going to happen, because everyone was unusually quiet. They had planned a neat trick and everyone was curious about his reactions. Finally the car stopped at an old deserted farmhouse. They all looked at Joe.

"This is it," said the driver.

"Blindfold and gag him," came the instructions. "OK; now get him in the house." The others obeyed without a word.

Inside it was already dark, and they had to use flashlights. They made their way into the damp, cool cellar. The room had a brick floor and resounded loudly to their heavy shoes.

"All right," mumbled the leader, "stretch him out on that table." Again no answer came from the others. "Tie him down. Be sure to leave the left arm over the edge of the table." They obeyed. "Now, bring the knife and pan."

They placed the pan under Joe's left arm. The leader took hold of Joe's hand. Then he said, "This won't hurt, Joe. We just want to see if you can really take it. I'm just going to sliver the skin at the wrist and take a few drops of blood." Joe tried to get up, but the ropes were well tied. He couldn't yell because of the gag in his mouth. He lay there.

The leader ran the cool back-edge of the knife lightly over Joe's wrist. The other boys sighed as if something had really happened. Then one of them dripped water on the wrist, while another started water dripping in the pan from an especially constructed device. The set-up was perfect--"blood" dripping from Joe's wrist and falling in the pan.

"Well, Joe," said one of the actives, "we'll be back in several hours. Don't bleed too much." They left laughing.

A few hours later the four boys returned. They were still laughing and joking. They stopped at the basement stairway and listened. There was still the constant dripping of the "blood." "Joe's still there. He hasn't got away," they were thinking to themselves. So on down they went.

They boys flashed their lights on the table where Joe was lying. They walked over to him. He didn't make a sound and they thought he had fallen asleep. One of the boys removed the blindfold. Joe didn't open his eyes. Joe was dead!

4. The Initiate Beheaded

Contributed by Audrey Berman, who heard it from Harriet Plotkin of South Bend, Indiana, 1944.

One year a certain fraternity decided to treat each pledge in a different manner for their rough initiation. One pledge was especially unlucky. Two of his fraternity brothers unexpectedly attacked him on a side street one rainy evening. They blindfolded, gagged, and tied him with a rope; then they took him to an old deserted house on the riverbank. They carried him up the creaking stairs to the third floor and left him bound to a chair. Since the date of initiation hadn't been announced, he didn't know that this was just a stunt; he believed that the two boys were robbers.

The beating of the rain on the windows and the sound of the wind through the bare room made him tremble. After an hour had passed, he began to have illusions of fire, crackling beneath him. Soon the sound of rushing water, coming nearer and nearer, accompanied the sound of the fire. He wondered whether it was worse to be burned to death or to be drowned. He didn't know which was worse. He kept hearing the noises. Finally he located the window by listening to the rain beat against it and managed to drag his chair to it. In a fit of terror he thrust his head through the glass pane with a terrific lunge.

After three hours had elapsed, the two boys returned for him. One called the other's attention to the fact that someone must have kicked over a can of oil or glue, for he had just stepped in a sticky puddle and had tripped over a small object. Without hesitation, they focused their flashlights on the spot. What they saw was not oil, but the head of their pledge, lying in a pool of blood. When they recovered sufficiently, they ran upstairs, where they found his headless body still fastened to the chair at the window.

Analysis Of Type 1

A close analysis of this type shows considerable similarity in outline but a great deal of variation in details. A statistical comparison of the main elements of the story and of the details of those elements brings out clearly both the similarities and the differences. Twelve variants are analyzed in this study.

In each variant the initial tragedy occurs in a haunted house or a deserted house. Fundamentally there is no great distinction between the two structures.

The number of initiates or pledges varies from one to twenty-two; but in five variants there is just one pledge. In three there are three pledges, and in two there are thirteen.

In only four variants is there mention of the number of active members who participate (and who are later cursed). In two there are four active members; in one there are twenty-seven, and in one ten.

In nine of the stories there is a rather elaborate introduction to the story which supplies a narrator--the last survivor of the active members who participated--who tells the story in first person. There are almost as many introductions as there are stories. In one of these several fraternity members are blown ashore in a sailboat and spend the night on an island with the survivor of the tragedy. In one some fishermen are stranded on an island and hear the survivor's tale before he goes crazy. In another some fraternity members are picnicking by a haunted house when the survivor appears, tells the story, enters the house and promptly goes raving mad. In one, two boys, returning to college, take shelter in an old shack and meet the survivor. In another the survivor sits down beside a student on a college campus and relates the story. In four the survivor sits beside a person on a train and tells the story. In three there is no introduction and no special narrator. The story merely begins with the initiation in the haunted house.

The pledge requirement, while present in all instances, shows some variation in almost all variants. In each the pledge, or pledges, must enter the haunted house, but usually for different purposes. In two variants the pledges must merely stay in the house for fifteen minutes. In one they are to enter and whistle. In one they are sent into the house in total darkness and told to bring back from the third floor any object which will prove they have been there. In another the pledges go in with candles and write down a list of things they see inside. In six they are given a specified number of matches, told to enter the house, and light a match at the window on each floor as they make their ascent. In three of these six they are to do something additional: bring back a hand of a skeleton, shout the name of the fraternity at the window of each floor, or bring back a jewel box placed in a room beforehand.

After three hours had elapsed, the two boys returned for him. One called the other's attention to the fact that someone must have picked over a can of oil or grease, for he had just stepped in a sticky puddle and had tripped over a small object. Without hesitation, they focused their flashlight on the spot. What they saw was not oil, but the head of their pledge, lying in a pool of blood. When they recovered sufficiently, they ran upstairs, where they found his headless body still fastened to the chair at the window.

Analysis of Part I

A close analysis of this type shows considerable similarity in outline but a great deal of variation in detail. A statistical comparison of the main elements of the story and of the details of those elements brings out clearly both the similarities and the differences. Twelve variants are analyzed in this study.

In each variant the initial tragedy occurs in a haunted house or a deserted house. Fundamentally there is no great distinction between the two structures.

The number of pledges or pledges varies from one to twenty-two; but in five variants there is just one pledge. In three there are three pledges, and in two there are thirteen.

In only four variants is there mention of the number of active members who participate (and who are later cursed). In two there are four active members; in one there are twenty-seven, and in one ten.

In nine of the stories there is a rather elaborate introduction to the story which supplies a narrator--the last survivor of the active members who participated--who tells the story in first person. There are almost as many introductions as there are stories. In one of these several pledges are blown ashore in a sailboat and spend the night on an island with the survivor of the tragedy. In one some fishermen are stranded on an island and hear the survivor's tale before he goes away. In another some fishermen are stranded by a haunted house when the survivor appears, tells the story, enters the house and promptly goes raving mad. In one, two boys, returning to college, take shelter in an old shack and meet the survivor. In another the survivor also takes a student on a college campus and tells the story. In four the survivor also tells a person on a train and tells the story. In three there is no introduction and no special narrator. The story merely begins with the initiation in the haunted house.

The pledge requirement, while present in all instances, shows some variation in almost all variants. In each the pledges, or pledges, must enter the haunted house, but usually for different purposes. In two variants the pledges must merely stay in the house for fifteen minutes. In one they are to enter and whistle. In one they are sent into the house in total darkness and told to bring back from the third floor any object which will prove they have been there. In another the pledges go in with candles and write down a list of things they see inside. In six they are given a specified number of minutes, told to enter the house, and light a lantern at the window on each floor as they make their ascent. In three of these six they are to do something additionally: bring back a hand of a skeleton, shoot the name of the first-century of the window of each floor, or bring back a jewel box placed in a room beforehand.

Further details of these four variants are not at all similar. The pledge requirement is different in each case, and the tragic end of the pledges differs in each instance. No two stories are identical in all elements--not even when two people tell the same story heard at the same time from the same informant.

With any group of variants which differ so widely in details, any generalizations are likely to be extremely dangerous. One can only hazard a guess at what might have been the original form of the story. Perhaps the wide variations are merely the result of slipshod story-telling methods of people who tell this kind of story. So many modifications might indicate a habit of relying on a bare outline plus harrowing details--the more harrowing the better--for narrative effect.

The story in this form seems to be used merely for scary entertainment. Professor William Hugh Jansen of the Indiana University English Department tells me that some fraternities use some form of a tragic initiation story--sometimes even acted out--to impress their pledges. If this practice accounts for the origin of this story, this particular type has wandered rather far afield. All of my informants were college girls and all had heard the story from girl friends, usually at slumber parties or ghost story sessions. All but two of the informants had heard the story before coming to Indiana University.

Indiana University

Ernest Baughman

(Readers who have heard any of these stories are urged to write them down, together with as much background history as possible, and send them to the editor. How old is the story? What colleges is it connected with? Is any of the story based on an actual occurrence?)

NOTES

WISCONSIN MOSQUITO-TRAPPING YARNS

Through the kindness of Mr. Charles E. Brown, of the Wisconsin Folklore Society, on a recent trip to Madison, Wisconsin, I had a short visit with Capt. Harry G. Dyer, aged 81, a former Mississippi River steamboat captain. Captain Dyer talked entertainingly and with vast knowledge about his river days. I asked him about the yearly routine of a riverman and he told me:

"Used to work on the upper Mississippi on raftboat--steamboats shovin' logs down. We used to get out about the first of April and lay up about the first of November. Then go on the Ohio and the lower Mississippi--tow boat work--towin' coal from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. I left the river in 1902. I worked in the woods three, four winters."

Although he was more interested in relating anecdotes than in recalling tall tales, Capt. Dyer promised to send me some of the latter if they came back to him. I took down the following yarn at his dictation.

"One was tellin' somebody else. They'd been up the Missouri trappin', and they come out with their pelts. In a saloon, you know, they were tellin' about some camp they were in. Said the mosquitoes pretty near et 'em up. They was so thick, you know, their bills would come right through the tent. Only way they could keep 'em out was to bend their bill over. They'd die when they couldn't get loose.

"Another one said he'd screw a nut on the end of the mosquito's bill so he couldn't pull it out."

(For other mosquito stories and references see this Bulletin I, 18-19, 49, 93-94. For Wisconsin tales contributed by Mr. C. E. Brown, see Bulletin I, 100-101; II, 20-21, 46-47.)

Hq North Atlantic Division, ATC
Manchester, N.H.

Lt. Herbert Halpert

A NOTE AND A QUERY

Six years ago I collected the following ballad from Mrs. L. J. Pantas in Stamford, Conn. She had learned it from her mother in Canisteo, Steuben County, New York. Mrs. Pantas' mother had learned it from her father, Thomas Coots who had immigrated to Canisteo in the third quarter of the last century. Whether Mr. Coots had learned the ballad after arriving in this country, whether he had learned it in Ulster which was his immediate homeland, or whether it was an inheritance from his Scottish ancestry, his granddaughter did not know. Why the first chorus, for I assume there should be one after line 2, has disappeared I have no idea.

I am interested both in knowing of the existence of versions in Indiana and in discovering other refrains.

My father he died, and I don't know how,
He left me three horses to follow the plow.
And I sold one horse and I bought me a cow;
I never made a bargain 'til I knew how.

Wee old waddler, Johnny catch a lassie oh--lassie oh,
Down by the broom.

I sold my cow and I bought me a calf,
Never knew a bargain 'til I lost half.

Refrain

I sold my calf and I bought me a pig.
Wasn't that a dandy thing to dance me a jig?

Refrain

I sold my pig and bought me a cat.
Wasn't that a nice thing to catch me a rat?

Refrain

I sold my cat and bought me a mouse;
His tail caught fire and burned down the house.

Refrain

Indiana University

William Hugh Jansen

A LOVE CHARM

The following charm was intercepted by one of the teachers of Smithville High School as it was being passed from one girl to another in the classroom in 1944. The students were in the ninth grade.

It is not this salt that I wish to burn
But my lover's heart that I wish to turn;
So that he may not rest nor happy be
Until he comes to see me.

Directions:

Throw a pinch of salt on the fire every Friday night for three Friday nights straight; and on the third Friday night your lover will come.

Indiana University

Eileen Holaday

TWO RHODESIAN BELIEFS

Here are two Rhodesian beliefs which I heard from Rev. S. D. Garrett of Searcy, Arkansas. Rev. Garrett was a missionary in Africa from 1930 to 1941.

1. Before going on a journey, a Rhodesian puts a stone in a tree --about twelve feet above ground-- "to hold the sun up (to keep it from going down) so the day will be long for his journey."

2. Rhodesian natives believe in God; "but he went away and left man (after creating him). He is angry with men. Don't know why."

Linton, Indiana

Marjory Titus Greene

A DEATH SIGN

My mother recently reminded me of a superstition which I remember hearing her describe before. The belief is that a person who is feeling "poorly" can taste side-pork to tell whether he will die or not.

Linton, Indiana

Marjory Titus Greene

BRIEF MENTION OF NEW BOOKS

From the pen of Charles E. Brown of the Wisconsin Folklore Society, we have four diverting booklets: Ole Olson, tales of Paul Bunyan's Swedish blacksmith; Shanty Boy, history and tales of Ol' Paul's mighty logger and entertainer; Hermits; and Lost Treasure Tales. All are available from Mr. Brown, 1934 Monroe Street, Madison Wisconsin, at thirty cents each.

The Story of the Sacred Harp (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1944) is a brief history of the "White Spiritual" music by George Pullen Jackson. The author shows how the form developed from the "Old Baptist" hymns, often using secular tunes, many of them folk tunes. He gives also a discussion of the characteristics of the music and of the state of Sacred Harp singing today.

If you haven't seen the new editions of Grimm's Fairy Tales and of The Adventures of Baron Munchausen, both published by Pantheon (1944), you may want to look them up. The Grimm is beautifully and profusely illustrated by Josef Scharl. The Munchausen is illustrated by Gustave Doré, who is probably better known for the Doré Bible, Grimm, \$7.50; Munchausen, \$3.75.

Indiana University

Ernest Baughman

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of The Hoosier Folklore Society will be held Thursday evening, October 25, 1945 in Indianapolis, Indiana. We hope to have a dinner meeting. Details of place, time, and program will be mailed shortly. There will be a business meeting and election of officers. We hope, too, that Prof. James (see below) will be present and that she will tell us more about collecting in Detroit.

INDIANA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

I would like also to call attention of all members to the program of the Folklore Group of the Indiana State Teachers Association, 2:00 p.m., Thursday, October 25, 1945, at the Masonic Temple, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Professor Thelma G. James of Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan, will discuss "Folklore of a Great City." Prof. James and her students have discovered and recorded an enormous amount of folklore of all kinds. In addition, other collectors of city folklore will tell of their activities in this field.

HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Officers, 1945

President: William Hugh Jansen, Dept. of English, Indiana University
Vice-President: Bjorn Winger, 127 East 50th, Indianapolis, Indiana
Secretary: Mrs. Ross Hickam, 601 W. Sixth, Bloomington, Indiana
Treasurer: Mrs. Cecelia H. Hendricks, Dept. of English,
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
Editor: Ernest W. Baughman, Dept. of English, Indiana University

The Hoosier Folklore Bulletin is issued by the Society. The Hoosier Folklore Society is affiliated with the American Folklore Society.

Joint membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society and the American Folklore Society is available at a special rate of four dollars a year to Indiana residents and to Indiana schools and libraries. Members receive The Hoosier Folklore Bulletin, The Journal of American Folklore, and Memoirs of the American Folklore Society as issued.

Membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society alone is one dollar a year. This is open to individuals, schools, and libraries anywhere in the United States. Members receive the Hoosier Folklore Bulletin.

All memberships are by the calendar year. Make money orders or checks payable to the Hoosier Folklore Society and mail to the Treasurer of the Society.

Notice to Members

Membership dues for 1945 should be mailed promptly to Mrs. Cecelia H. Hendricks, Treasurer, Hoosier Folklore Society, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Members are urged to secure new members for the Society and to contribute manuscripts for publication. Only with an increase in the funds made available by increased membership can we enlarge the size and scope of the Bulletin.